

Marked Targets: Coercive Diplomacy and Domestic Terrorism

Colton Heffington

University of Missouri

Abstract

How do sanctions affect the dynamics of political violence in target states? More specifically, how might sanctions affect domestic terrorism in these states? The literature on the consequences of sanctions in target states is rich, yet there has been limited research on how sanctions affect terrorism in target states. In this article, I argue that economic deprivation associated with costly sanctions makes recruiting and carrying out attacks easier for domestic terrorist organizations. Building on work that examines the consequences of sanctions and the economic roots of terrorism, I suggest that sanctions impose economic hardship on regular citizens, who are then more likely to turn to anti-government violence. The result is that the pool from which terrorist groups recruit is broadened during sanctions. I test this argument quantitatively and find support for the hypothesis that costly sanctions lead to higher levels of domestic terrorism.

Keywords: sanctions, terrorism, relative deprivation

The Iranian economy took a sharp downturn in 1979 partially as a result of sanctions imposed by the US government. These sanctions severed economic ties between the United States and Iran, shut down oil exports from Iran to the United States, and led to the freezing of roughly 11 billion USD worth of Iranian assets in US banks (Maloney 2010). Trade sanctions alone had a significant impact, as total exports from Iran dipped from \$19.9 billion (in current USD) in 1979 to \$14.1 billion in 1980 (Barbieri and Keshk 2009; Barbieri et al. 2012). In response, the domestic political opposition in Iran used this economic downturn as an opportunity for political gain. In particular, the People's Mojahedin of Iran, a group dedicated to armed struggle against the young Islamic Republic, blamed the regime for deteriorating standards of living. Citing rampant inflation and unemployment, as well as trade dependence on Western economies, this group successfully incorporated claims about the weak economy into their ongoing propaganda mission (Abrahamian 1989, 207). As the People's Mojahedin, eventually known as Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), contin-

ued to carry out acts of terrorism in Iran throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the ability of MEK leaders to seize on the economic damage associated with sanctions suggests that sanctions provide an opportunity for terrorist groups in target states to increase momentum, thereby resulting in increased levels of political violence.

While there is plenty of evidence that sanctions create hardship for the public in target states (Hoskins 1997; Peken 2009, 2011; Wood 2008), we have limited evidence about where the public will place blame for this hardship. Allen (2008) shows that sanctions lead to increased levels of mass anti-government behavior, including demonstrations and riots, suggesting that targeted publics are likely to blame their home government. However, Choi and Luo (2013) demonstrate that sanctions lead to an increase in transnational terrorism, as targeted publics blame sender state governments for the hardships caused by sanctions.

This article provides further evidence for the claim that costly sanctions can increase anti-government sentiment within target states, where costly sanctions are understood as those sanctions that cause significant eco-

conomic damage to the target state economy. The argument is that costly sanctions generate economic instability and grievances that allow opposition groups to thrive politically. Domestic opposition groups recruit more effectively and even carry out more attacks when sanctions target their home government because economic hardships imposed by sanctions fall on regular citizens. Members of the public are subsequently more likely to join or support domestic opposition groups, thus broadening the pool from which those pursuing violent attacks may recruit (Bueno de Mesquita 2005). The findings here show that domestic terrorism increases as a function of sanctions, and further attention should be paid to the effect that sanctions have on contentious politics.

Beyond identifying a consequence of sanctions, this article also provides new information about an international determinant of domestic terrorism. Scholars have begun to explore how international actors can foster and shape domestic political violence in other states (Bapat 2012; Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011; Byman 2005). However, few studies have examined the role of economic coercion in this equation. Noteworthy here is Thyne (2006), who finds that sanctions have no effect on civil war onset, and Escriba-Folch (2010), who shows that sanctions lead to shorter civil wars. If we want to know how sanctions affect domestic political violence in target states more broadly, we must examine the impact of costly sanctions on different forms of domestic political violence.

Context

Though much of the sanctions literature focuses on the effectiveness of sanctions in altering target behavior, a key strand of research focuses on the inadvertent consequences of sanctions. Generally, research suggests that sanctions have a broad impact on the economic, social, and political dimensions of life for civilians in target countries Weiss (1997). Peksen (2011) demonstrates that sanctions have a significant negative impact on public health in target states, and Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot (1990) point to negative human rights outcomes associated with sanctions. In the same broad sense, both Wood (2008) and Peksen (2009) find that sanctions decrease government respect for physical integrity rights.

Regarding political violence, Allen (2008) shows that sanctions can increase anti-government demonstrations and riots in target states depending on the arrangement of political institutions. As noted above, terms of large-scale conflict, Escriba-Folch (2010) finds that sanctions lead to shorter civil wars, and likewise Thyne (2006) argues that sanctions do not increase the odds of civil war, as costly signals (i.e., sanctions in this case) allow partners in target

states to adjust their bargaining positions. Conversely, Nielsen et al. (2011) show that foreign aid shocks (a type of sanction) can lead to civil war. While such previous work provides evidence that sanctions lead to increased levels of political violence in target states, the argument I present here improves our general understanding of this relationship by connecting sanctions specifically to levels of domestic terrorism, a form of political violence otherwise ignored by this literature.

The Determinants of Terrorism

Much of the cross-national work on the determinants of terrorism has focused on how country-level indicators are correlated with rising levels of terrorism, though more recent scholarship has begun to distinguish domestic and transnational terrorism as separate phenomena. Indeed, Young and Findley's (2011) call for scholars to think more carefully about the different processes driving domestic and transnational terrorism has been well heeded by recent empirical work. Piazza (2011) argues that minority discrimination leads directly to domestic terrorism, while Findley, Piazza, and Young (2012) show how interstate rivalry drives transnational terrorism. Moving forward, analysts should focus specifically on domestic terrorism, as the vast majority of terrorism is domestic in nature rather than transnational (LaFree and Dugan 2009).

Regardless of this distinction, significant debate stems from competing assessments of the role of domestic political institutions (Aksoy and Carter 2014; Foster, Braithwaite, and Sobek 2013; Chenoweth 2010; Piazza 2010; Li 2005; Eubank and Weinberg 2001; Schmid 1992; Conrad et al. 2014) and economic conditions (Enders and Hoover 2012; Abadie 2006; Blomberg, Hess, and Weerapana 2004; Bueno de Mesquita 2005; Krueger and Malackova 2003) in promoting terrorist attacks. Though these are by no means the only determinants discussed in the literature, recent work has looked at how repressive or discriminatory government behavior increases domestic terrorism (Daxecker and Hess 2013; Piazza 2011; Walsh and Piazza 2010). Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug (2013) and Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch (2011) have also persuasively demonstrated that group-based grievances concerning inequality are a key driver of civil conflict.

This literature provides a rich foundation for a new wave of research, with particularly good reasons to link the consequences of sanctions to the literature on the determinants of domestic terrorism. We know that sanctions generate grievances within the target public, yet we have little idea whether those grievances manifest as costs for the target government beyond the work of Allen (2008). By focusing the analysis on domestic terrorism,

we can get a better sense of how the cost of sanctions experienced by civilians translates into increasing levels of political violence.

Sanctions have been linked to an increase in contentious political behavior directed toward target governments in previous research, and domestic terrorism is one type of contentious behavior. While previous research has found that sanctions do not affect some types of contentious behavior (Thyne 2006) or only do so conditionally (Allen 2008), we can expect costly sanctions to increase the prevalence of domestic terrorism relative to other forms of contentious political behavior because acts of terrorism require less coordination and mobilization among affected members of the public in target states. More specifically, an act of terrorism can be carried out by a single motivated individual, whereas protests or acts of open rebellion necessarily require mass mobilization. Furthermore, government policies designed to repress contentious mass behavior (e.g., curfews, laws outlawing unions or group congregation) may not sufficiently hinder the coordination and execution of terrorist attacks. In some cases, repressive policies backfire and lead to increasing levels of support for radical groups (DeNardo 1985). Repressive counter-terrorist policies frequently used in closed political systems may stifle mass contentious behavior in target states (Allen 2008), but they can in fact induce acts of terrorism in the same states (DeNardo 1985; Walsh and Piazza 2010). These findings suggest that the human costs of sanctions, undoubtedly severe, may translate into increased levels of contentious political behavior generally and increased levels of domestic terrorism specifically.

Theory

Economic sanctions may be imposed for a variety of reasons, as outlined by the extant literature. Sanctions may be the result of bargaining failure (Drezner 2003) or a consequence of pressure from domestic interest groups in the sender state (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 1988). Some have suggested that sanctions are often an expression of imperialism (Wall 1998). Regardless of their effectiveness in extracting concessions (e.g., Whang, McLean, and Kuberski 2013; Early 2011; Allen 2005), it is noteworthy that they can still generate significant economic costs for the target state's economy.

Though many sanctions generate very low costs for the target state, we do observe instances of very costly sanctions (Morgan, Bapat, and Krustev 2009).¹ In these cases,

civilians often bear the brunt of these costs, particularly as the scope and intensity of sanctions increase. For example, comprehensive sanctions designed to target Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq during the 1990s negatively affected basically every dimension of social, political, and economic life for regular Iraqis (Hoskins 1997).

Costly sanctions frequently increase unemployment, drive inflation up, and make it more difficult for civilians to purchase basic goods outside black markets. Sanctions make it more difficult to transfer money into or out of a country, make business travel impossible, and damage financial investment in the target state more generally. Because these impacts are experienced as sudden economic distress, citizens are more likely to support or join an anti-government group. The argument is not that the impoverished should always or will only engage in violence against their government, but that people who suffer as the result of sudden economic contraction are more likely to mobilize against the government, and some of them may turn violent.

The notion that economic hardship can lead to increasing levels of political violence is not a novel assumption. In his wide-ranging analysis of civil political violence, Gurr (1968) famously argued that economic deprivation increases such violence. In the context of economic coercion, Allen (2008) suggests that sanctions induce economic malaise that activates feelings of relative deprivation as described by Gurr. The result is an increase in collective-based violence. I advance an argument that builds on this logic by focusing on terrorism.² Such a perspective is justified because it builds on our general understanding of how sanctions generate economic grievance and may prove useful in understanding how sanctions lead to other forms of political violence.

Of course, the effect of sanctions on target economies is extremely variable: some sanction episodes are minor, while others are quite severe. For sanctions to generate grievance, they must have some significant negative impact on the target economy. The argument posited here emphasizes the effect of costly sanctions for this reason. Symbolic or minor sanctions do not actually affect the

1 According to the TIES data, 20 percent of imposed sanctions since 1945 have resulted in either major or severe damage to the target state's economy.

2 My definition of terrorism is in line with the general definition provided by the Global Terrorism Database (START 2013), which is used widely in academic studies of terrorism. Acts of terrorism must be intentional, violent, or include threats of violence, committed by sub-national actors, and should generally be motivated toward attaining some political, religious, economic, or social goal by coercing or intimidating audiences beyond the immediate victims.

health of the target economy and are subsequently not relevant to a discussion of economic deprivation as a motivation for domestic terrorism. Sanctions must have macroeconomic consequences to have an effect on the incidence of terrorism in the target state.

Costly sanctions create an environment of economic instability that is conducive to terrorism. Extant research on the determinants of terrorism shows that periods of economic contraction increase the prevalence of terrorism (Blomberg et al. 2004) and that low levels of economic development may also be associated with the genesis of terrorism (Lai 2007; Azam and Thelen 2008). This claim about the role of sanctions and their associated economic consequences on terrorism is important, considering counterclaims regarding the role of economics and terrorism. In particular, several (Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Krueger 2008; Piazza 2009) have argued that terrorism does not in fact stem from low levels of economic development. However, the point here is not that low levels of development within countries create terrorism. Building on Blomberg et al. (2004), I posit that sudden, sharp economic downturns make terrorism more likely.

Important to the argument here is that scholarship focusing on the impact of economic conditions on terrorism frequently uses long-term, temporal measures of economic development, including GDP per capita or infant mortality rates, to measure economic deprivation rather than sudden, drastic changes in the status quo. The significance of this distinction in measurement is important because I suggest that sanctions increase terrorism due to economic shocks, rather than static low levels of economic development. My assumption is that economic contractions make states relatively more hospitable for violent groups, and previous research (i.e., Blomberg et al. 2004) supports this contention. Sanctions are one source of economic contraction, such that it is plausible to link economic coercion and terrorism in the most general sense.

More specifically, sanctions can lead to rising levels of domestic terrorism. This is likely to occur because the costs of sanctions increase both the total pool of individuals that terrorist groups may recruit from and the quality of the average recruit by limiting economic opportunities for civilians and by generating grievances within the same group. By this mechanism, the recruiting pool for violent groups becomes both broader and deeper. As Bueno de Mesquita (2005) notes, terrorist groups screen volunteers for quality, and declining economic conditions raise the overall quality of available volunteers. Civilians with high levels of education who might not otherwise turn to violence are more likely to do so under situations of economic contraction. Terrorist groups quickly gain access to individuals with higher levels of education who were

previously employed or earning a more comfortable living prior to the onset of sanctions. We can link sanctions and domestic terrorism in this context because sanctions clearly induce turmoil in target economies.

Beyond Bueno de Mesquita's (2005) theoretical model, the claim about declining economic conditions and terrorism is further supported by demographics research on so-called youth bulges (large youth cohorts within a country). In particular, Urdal (2004, 2006) demonstrates that these youth bulges lead to increasing levels of political violence. As the economy worsens, young people are presented with fewer economic opportunities, thereby creating greater incentives for political violence. Urdal (2006) shows that declining economic conditions paired with a youth bulge lead specifically to an increasing risk of domestic terrorism. In turn, these youth bulges frequently lead to government repression (Nordås and Davenport 2013), creating the potential for an ongoing cycle of violence.

This previous work on demographics and violence further illuminates how sanctions can influence terrorism. Young people facing a severe lack of economic opportunity as they enter the labor market are more likely to experience feelings of relative deprivation, and are thus more vulnerable to recruitment. Furthermore, Perliger, Koehler-Derrick, and Pedahzur (2016) show that once recruited, younger members of terrorist groups are more likely to be directly involved in the execution of violence. Building on Bueno de Mesquita's (2005) theory, the consequence is once again a broadening of the pool of individuals available for recruitment by terrorist groups.

Economic contractions caused by sanctions are liable to activate feelings of relative deprivation in potential terrorist group recruits, thereby increasing the number of individuals willing to mobilize against the government. Likewise, the average quality of membership in violent groups is liable to increase. Planning and logistics should ultimately become easier with better educated, more efficient members, thereby increasing a group's ability to carry out more successful attacks. This in turn makes groups more prolific as they increase in size and capacity, and should reflect an overall increase in terrorism within target countries.

The Iranian case helps show how this process occurs. US sanctions imposed on Iran in 1979 following the onset of the Iran hostage crisis were harsh and contributed to a deepening economic crisis that lasted throughout the 1980s. As a direct response to rising inflation and unemployment, several anti-government groups began forming and organizing guerrilla training sessions (Abrahamian 1989). Mojahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) grew significantly by using the weak economy as leverage against the govern-

ment (*ibid.*, pp. 64, 207). By way of example, Cohen (2009) describes a situation whereby Iranians fleeing to the Iraqi border could either join MEK or seek shelter at a UN refugee camp in Iraq (p. 37). These people were not devout followers of MEK's brand of Islamic socialism, yet MEK won over some of the would-be refugees by promising housing, money, and medical assistance. Though the Iranian revolution generated refugees for both political and economic reasons, it is important to note that insofar as sanctions contributed to the economic depression during the 1980s, sanctions pushed otherwise neutral individuals toward violent political groups.

Interestingly, there is evidence that policymakers are aware of this potential consequence. In the 1980s, many members of the global community imposed a series of sanctions targeting apartheid in South Africa. Noticeably missing from the group of sender states was the UK. In explaining their absence, Margaret Thatcher argued that sanctions were bound to do more harm than good for the citizens of South Africa. Thatcher went so far as to suggest that sanctions would cause economic damage to black South Africans and provide implicit support for the African National Congress (ANC) as a "typical terrorist organization" (Borger 2013).³ Though it is questionable whether the UK's participation in sanctions would have affected ANC activity, given that the South African government already faced harsh sanctions from other senders, it is worth noting policymakers' awareness of the possibility that sanctions will increase or otherwise provide support for domestic terrorist activity.

Alternatives to this logic include the creation of an internal public opinion rally that favors the government (Galtung 1967) or an increase in transnational terrorism targeting the sender state (Choi and Luo 2013). While it is certainly possible citizens may blame external powers for imposing sanctions in the first place, it is also important to consider who is most likely to suffer from costly sanctions in target states. In other words, we must understand how leaders in targeted states shift the economic costs of sanctions in order to understand how the citizenry affected are mobilized.

Though political leaders would obviously prefer not to suffer the costs of sanctions, they provide an element of control by shifting the costs of sanctions onto the citizenry. While targeted leaders cannot determine which industries or trade sectors are impacted by sanctions, they can control who to compensate in order to ameliorate the pain of sanctions (Escriba-Folch 2012). When forced to make this choice, leaders tend to compensate their political supporters in order to retain power (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Allies and supporters of the targeted government are thus compensated, although such actors are unlikely to resort to anti-government violence regardless. Notably, it is those who are neutral or otherwise opposed to the government who are least likely to be compensated in case of sanctions, and more likely to engage in anti-government violence. Subsequently, those who suffer the most are also the most vulnerable to the recruitment efforts of terrorist groups.

We see an example of this in the treatment of Kurds in Iraq following the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein was facing extraordinarily costly sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the United States as a result of his intervention in Kuwait. Following the breakdown of autonomy talks with Kurdish groups, Hussein ordered an economic blockade in the Kurdish region of Iraq, resulting in a dire shortage of basic resources like food and fuel despite UN efforts to provide humanitarian relief (O'Ballance 1996, 195; Hoskins 1997). This functionally shifted the costs of sanctions disproportionately to the Kurds at a time when political and economic discrimination formed key components of the Kurdish struggle in Iraq. To the extent that the Kurdish struggle against Hussein's government was motivated in part by bleak economic conditions, costly sanctions exaggerated such conditions and helped recruitment efforts by groups linked to the ongoing Kurdish insurgency, including the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

A similar scenario occurred in Haiti during the early 1990s following the military-led coup against Jean-Bertrand Aristide. After a series of failed negotiations, the UN responded with an economic embargo that lasted through 1994. During that time, regular citizens, including the poor, suffered disproportionately due to the sanctions (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 1996; Gibbons 1999). In particular, news reports at the time suggest that many Aristide supporters came from poor neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince. In response, pro-Aristide forces began attacking the government almost immediately. According to the Global Terrorism Database, terrorist violence against the military government peaked in 1994 with 27 attacks, many of which were carried out by pro-Aristide activists. Subsequently, through the creation of an unbearable eco-

3 Some question whether the ANC should be classified as a terrorist organization. Because credible, neutral academic sources like the Global Terrorism Database provide clear evidence that the ANC was engaged in acts of terrorism during the 1980s, it seems reasonable to consider the ANC a terrorist group. This has no bearing on our understanding of the ANC as a peaceful political party after being unbanned.

conomic situation, the imposition of sanctions granted leverage to the pro-Aristide movement. Of course, there would have been no terrorism committed by pro-Aristide activists had the 1991 coup not occurred; however, it is important to note that violence did not peak in the direct aftermath of Aristide's removal from power. Rather, domestic terrorism hit its apex only after sanctions were applied.

Overall, this argument does not discount the possibility that individuals might rally around their leader or attack the sender state. Target governments may be able to drum up ideological support that successfully places the blame on sender states.⁴ And while it is certainly true that affected citizens might blame the sender government, as Choi and Luo (2013) argue, there is no reason to believe that all affected civilians would solely blame the sender state. For my argument to be supported, it must merely be the case that some affected civilians are more willing to join domestic terrorist groups, such that we are likely to see an increase in levels of domestic terrorist attacks. This accords with the literature on sanctions and transnational terrorist groups, but suggests that there is no reason to believe *only* transnational terrorist groups benefit while domestic terrorist groups do not.

Given the overall damaging nature of sanctions, a logical alternative is the degree to which sanctions can make it more difficult for terrorist groups to operate. Extant literature, however, does not support this perspective. While arms embargoes could make it more difficult for terrorists to procure weapons and materials necessary to carry out attacks, Andreas (2005) suggests that sanctions are in fact more likely to strengthen transnational smuggling networks, a source of weapons and materials that terrorist groups are likely to rely on in the first place. In other words, sanctions are liable to strengthen black markets already in use by terrorist groups. Moreover, the empirical expectations of this argument run in precisely the opposite direction. If sanctions make it more difficult for terrorist groups to operate, we should expect costly sanctions to be negatively associated with acts of terrorism. However, this is not what we find.

There are good reasons to believe that costly sanctions can lead to higher levels of terrorism in target states given our current understanding of the consequences of sanc-

tions and the determinants of terrorism. The theoretical argument articulated above joins two complementary literatures and generates one key implication about the relationship between sanctions and domestic terrorism:

H: The presence of costly sanctions or increasing levels of costly sanctions leads to higher levels of domestic terrorism.

Data and Methods

I test this hypothesis using a sample of country-year data from 1977 through 2009.⁵ In total, the sample includes 158 countries. The primary dependent variable is the level of domestic terrorism in a country during each year. Domestic terrorism is operationalized as the number of domestic terrorist attacks in each country during each year using the Global Terrorism Database (START 2013). The GTD classifies an incident as an act of terrorism if it is intentional, entails violence or the threat of violence, and is committed by sub-national actors motivated by political, religious, social, or economic goals (i.e., acts committed by state agents are not included).⁶ Looking at the count of attacks per year is appropriate, as it is a general indicator of the prevalence of terrorism. Other alternative indicators, such as the total number of fatalities, are often skewed at the country-level year by the occurrence of a single extremely destructive attack.⁷

To isolate domestic terrorism, I purged the combined GTD dataset of transnational attacks using several filtering mechanisms provided by the GTD. First, attacks where the nationality of the perpetrators is different from the location of the attack itself were removed. This process was repeated for the nationality of the perpetrators and the nationality of victims. Finally, attacks where the nationality of the target is different from the location of the attack were removed as well. The result is a sample limited to domestic terrorist attacks. I examine two separate dependent variables using this sample. First, I consider the total number of domestic terrorist attacks in

4 The appendix to this piece examines the possibility that the effect of sanctions on domestic terrorism is contingent upon the target government's ability to control public opinion via state control of the media. I do not find that the effect of sanctions is conditional on state control of the media.

5 All observations for 1993 are excluded from all models because GTD data on individual terrorist attacks in this year are missing for all countries.

6 There are additional criteria and filtering mechanisms employed by the GTD not discussed here to conserve space, but all coding information is available via the GTD Codebook.

7 Another possible indicator of group efficiency is the ratio of failed to successful attacks. This alternative makes sense but is not appropriate because we lack reliable data on all failed or botched attacks over time.

each country during each year. Second, I estimate the count of terrorist attacks resulting in at least one fatality in each country during each year. This second model establishes relevant correlation between sanctions and salient terrorist events.

Because both dependent variables are interval-level data, operate as a count of events, and appear over-dispersed, I estimate negative binomial regression models. I consider whether a zero-inflated model would best fit the data; however, diagnostics suggest there is little if any difference between estimation techniques.⁸ The dependent variables are autoregressive, in that each variable at time-*t* is partially a function of itself in the past. More specifically, I find both dependent variables at time-*t* to be partly a function of themselves at time *t*-1 and *t*-2. In other words, the first two lags of each variable are significant. To address this, a two-year lagged rolling average of the dependent variable is included on the right-hand side of both models. This variable is labeled “Past Terror.” To account for panel-specific error variance, robust standard errors are clustered by country.

The independent variable comes from the Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions (TIES) (Morgan, Bapat, and Kobayashi 2013) dataset. Because the theoretical argument emphasizes costly sanctions, I include only cases where the sanctions resulted in either major or severe economic costs for the target state. Per the TIES codebook, sanctions with major costs lead to increases of over 5 percent in inflation or unemployment, or drastic reductions in trade relationships. Subsequently, severe sanctions have the potential to halt the target economy’s ability to function. It is worth noting that these are not anticipated costs, but the ex post costs suffered by target states.

The measure of sanctions is set to 1 in the first year of sanctions onset and decays at a linear rate over time. Specifically, the variable is multiplied by 0.9 of its value in the previous observation.⁹ This continues until fresh sanctions are applied, in which case the variable is reset to 1, or the sanctions are lifted, in which case the variable is set to 0. The impact of sanctions over time decays in the

empirical model because we would expect sanctions to have the greatest effect on terrorism via economic shocks in the first year and then diminish over time. So long as sanctions are in place and creating economic hardship, we can expect them to affect terrorism; however, this effect should fade over time. Subsequently, this measure is lagged by one year.¹⁰ Altogether, the sample includes costly sanctions in 38 countries over 344 country-years.

The empirical model includes several covariates that we might expect to be correlated with both the independent and dependent variables. First, a dichotomous measure of civil war is included because civil wars are often associated with an increase in domestic terrorism (Sambanis 2008; Findley and Young 2012). This measure comes from the Correlates of War’s (CoW) intrastate war database (Sarkees 2010). I code states that experience civil wars as a 1 during each year of the war and a 0 otherwise. Third-party participants are not coded as experiencing a civil war.

The model also includes measures of government repression from the Political Terror Scale (Gibney et al. 2015). I include the measure of repression from Amnesty International reports, replacing missing data where necessary with data from the US State Department.¹¹ This variable, Human Rights Behavior, is an ordinal measure of respect for human rights that runs from 1 through 5 for all observations. Higher values indicate higher levels of repression. The measure is lagged by one year. The model also includes change in this measure from year to year, labeled Human Rights Change, to account for revisions to the status quo level of repression. These measures must be included because government repression, or at least changes in the status quo level of repression, may occur as a result of sanctions (Wood 2008; Peksen 2009) and lead to increasing levels of terrorism (Walsh and Piazza 2010). Including these measures allows us to be confident that sanctions do not increase terrorism solely because they also tend to increase government repression in target states.

8 Following the logic of Drakos and Gofas (2006), these models were estimated with a measure of *Democracy* in the first stage. The Vuong statistic is not close to significant for the total attacks model and only marginally significant for the fatal attacks model ($p = .08$). The overall results remain very similar regardless of estimator choice.

9 The results discussed are robust to the use of various decay rates, as demonstrated in the online appendix.

10 Readers might wonder whether high levels of domestic terrorism are associated with the onset of sanctions. I have estimated monadic models of sanctions onset and do not find high levels of terrorism in the past to be associated with the onset of costly sanctions.

11 The PTS scale is used over the alternative CIRI indicator to help maximize the temporal range of the sample. The CIRI indicator is only available from 1981 on, while PTS coverage begins in 1976. The online appendix to this piece provides robustness checks using Fariss’s (2014) human rights protection data as well.

The model includes two measures of conflict and stability from the Cross-National Time-Series database (Banks 2002). First, Anti-Government Demonstrations is employed to capture the baseline level of anti-government sentiment in target states. This includes the number of anti-government demonstrations, with 100 or more demonstrators, that are related to domestic politics (as opposed to foreign policy). Because sanctions can lead to anti-government protests (Allen 2008), we can reasonably expect that general anti-government sentiment is further correlated with domestic terrorism. Second, Government Crises captures the overall stability of the target government outside civil war. This includes the number of events in each country-year that threaten the survival of a regime outside civil war. Because sanctions are often associated with general instability, thereby increasing the likelihood of terrorist attacks, including this variable avoids a spurious result.

The model also includes Democracy as a measure of domestic political institutions. Operationalized using the polity2 score from the Polity IV dataset, the inclusion of this variable is based upon the expectation that democracies suffer from higher levels of terrorism (e.g., Abadie 2006). To account for a state’s general economic development and its capacity to fight terrorism, the model includes the natural log of GDP per capita from the Penn World Tables (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2012). Based upon Eyerma’s (1998) argument that large states are more likely to experience higher levels of terrorism, the model specifically includes the natural log of the population in thousands, also from the Penn World Tables. Finally, a set of regional dummy variables are included because states in particular regions may be more prone to domestic terrorism and more frequently targeted with sanctions relative to states in other regions. The model uses CoW region codes for North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, the Far East, and Oceania.

Table 1 provides basic descriptive statistics for all measures in both the overall sample and the subset of sanctioned states. The average value of Domestic Terrorism is 7.82, but the standard deviation is large at 37.45. This indicates that terrorist attacks are clustered and specifically justifies the use of a negative binomial model in estimating attacks. We see a similar pattern with Fatal Attacks. As a subset of the full sample, sanctioned states demonstrate higher levels of domestic terrorism, higher levels of repression, more anti-government demonstrations, and lower levels of democracy. Sanctioned states are generally half a point more repressive as a subset of the larger sample on the Political Terror Scale. Sanc-

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Full sample	Mean	Standard deviation
All attacks	7.82	37.45
Fatal attacks	4.13	20.98
Sanctions (decay)	0.04	0.16
Human rights behavior	2.55	1.12
Change in human rights behavior	0.01	0.67
Civil war	0.08	0.26
Demonstrations	0.56	1.59
Government crises	0.13	0.42
Democracy	1.53	7.31
GDP (logged)	10.18	2.17
Population (logged)	9.09	1.55
Sanctioned states		
All attacks	9.96	34.76
Fatal attacks	5.92	25.69
Sanctions (decay)	0.43	0.35
Human rights behavior	3.09	1.16
Change in human rights behavior	0.02	0.70
Civil war	0.10	0.31
Demonstrations	1.04	2.53
Government crises	0.18	0.43
Democracy	-0.84	6.90
GDP (logged)	10.55	1.93
Population (logged)	9.44	1.26

tioned states are also about 2.38 points less democratic as a subset, and the number of anti-government demonstrations increases from 0.56 in the overall sample to 1.04 in sanctioned states. Civil war is slightly more prevalent in sanctioned states as the mean shifts from 0.08 to 0.10, but civil war is not common in either the larger sample or the subset of sanctioned states. This indicates that sanctions overlap with other determinants of domestic terrorism, and demonstrates why these covariates are necessary.

Analysis

The results provide evidence that sanctions are associated with higher levels of domestic terrorism. Table 2 displays these results. Model 1 presents results of all terrorist attacks, and Model 2 presents results of only attacks producing at least one fatality. In both models, the measure of sanctions is positive and significant. Moreover, the coefficients associated with the independent variable appear similar across dependent variables.

The results regarding the other covariates are quite similar across models and follow patterns consistent with the extant literature. High levels of repression are associated with higher levels of domestic terrorism, indicated by the positive and significant relationship of human

Table 2. Sanctions and domestic terrorism, 1977–2009

	(Model 1) All terrorist attacks	(Model 2) Fatal attacks
Sanctions $t-1$	1.518** (0.479)	1.535** (0.522)
Human rights behavior $t-1$	0.789** (0.098)	0.815** (0.096)
Change in human rights	0.636** (0.100)	0.565** (0.098)
Civil war	1.647** (0.376)	1.537** (0.337)
Anti-government demonstrations	0.143** (0.045)	0.151** (0.045)
Government crises	0.271** (0.105)	0.354** (0.108)
Democracy	0.081** (0.018)	0.069** (0.018)
GDP per capita	0.066 (0.107)	–0.106 (0.104)
Population	0.500** (0.147)	0.589** (0.153)
Past terror	0.032** (0.008)	0.057** (0.014)
Constant	–8.636** (0.902)	–8.520** (0.915)
Observations	4,213	4,213

Robust standard errors in parentheses. Two tailed tests; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.
Regional indicators included but suppressed to conserve space.

rights behavior in all models (Walsh and Piazza 2010). Increasing repression also leads to higher levels of terrorism, as indicated by the change in human rights measure. Both findings are consistent when looking at all terrorist attacks and fatal attacks. The key implication when comparing the results of the human rights variables to the sanctions measure is that repression, which may be a result of sanctions, does not drive domestic terrorism alone. That is, sanctions have an effect on terrorism that is independent of government repression.

As expected, civil wars are robustly associated with higher levels of domestic terrorism alongside increasing levels of anti-government demonstrations and government crises. That is, unpopular governments facing some form of internal challenge are likely to experience higher levels of terrorism. More importantly, we can infer that sanctions have an effect on terrorism even after accounting for the overall stability and conflict status of the target state.

Democratic institutions are further associated with higher levels of terrorism, as indicated in both models. This is consistent with the research on domestic institu-

tions and terrorism (Abadie 2006; Eubank and Weinberg 2001). GDP per capita does not appear to have an effect on domestic terrorism in either model, though there is an ongoing debate regarding how one would expect an aggregate measure of state wealth to be correlated with terrorism (see Abadie 2006; Enders and Hoover 2012). Finally, population is positively and significantly correlated in both models, suggesting that domestic terrorism is partially a function of state size (Eyerman 1998).

Substantive Effects

To provide a more intuitive discussion of the substantive effects associated with the key variable of interest, Table 3 displays the results of a simulation using information from Model 1.¹² The outcome of interest is the total predicted number of terrorist attacks for an average target state. The goal is to understand to what degree sanctions increase terrorism while holding other values from the equation constant. To provide context to the effect of sanctions relative to other significant predictors of terrorism, Table 3 shows the expected increase in terrorism associated with varying levels of sanctions, human rights behavior, democracy, and civil war. All other variables are held constant according to their average value in target states.

By way of example, the average value of anti-government demonstrations for sanctioned states is equal to 1. The variable is subsequently held at 1 when examining the effects of sanctions, human rights behavior, democracy, and civil war on the predicted number of terrorist attacks. Regional dummies are varied so that the Middle East and North Africa indicator is the excluded category and all other regional dummies equal 0. This is done because states in the Middle East and North Africa are more likely to be sanctioned relative to states in any other region. As noted in the discussion of descriptive statistics, the average targeted state features moderately high levels of repression, ambiguous political institutions, and at least one large anti-government demonstration per year.

Each indicator is varied in order to isolate its substantive impact on the expected number of terrorist attacks. The value of the sanctions variable ranges from 0 to 1 as a proxy for the imposition of sanctions on targeted states. The Human Rights Behavior and Democracy measures are increased by one standard deviation from their mean in all targeted states. This amounts to a one-unit change

12 These simulations were generated using Clarify (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2003).

Table 3. Predicted domestic terrorism attacks (model 1)

Change in predicted attacks	
	Average target state
Baseline attacks	2.0 [0.8, 4.6]
Sanctions (0→1)	+4.3 [0.7, 13.9]
Human rights behavior (3→4)	+2.5 [0.9, 5.6]
Democracy (-1→6)	+1.7 [0.4, 4.6]
Civil War (0→1)	+9.1 [2.0, 24.5]
Values of variables in simulation	
Sanctions	.43
Human rights behavior	3
Change in human rights	0
Civil war	0
Anti-government demonstrations	1
Government crises	0
Democracy	-1
GDP per capita (log)	10.55
Population (log)	9.44
Past terror (rolling avg.)	10
Region	Middle East/North Africa

Note: 95 percent confidence intervals in brackets.

in the Human Rights Behavior variable from 3 to 4. According to the PTS data, this change is the equivalent of moving from the United States to Mexico or Brazil in 2012. For Democracy, this amounts to a seven-point increase on the Polity IV scale from -1 to 6. According to the Polity IV data, this is comparable to moving from Uganda to Namibia or Mozambique in 2014. These changes represent sizable shifts in terms of both respect for human rights and democratic institutions. Civil war is likewise varied from 0 to 1 as a proxy for when a state moves from no civil war to experiencing civil war. This simulated change is substantive, as this measure of civil war is only equal to 1 in observations with at least one thousand battle deaths.

The baseline predicted number of domestic terrorist attacks in the average targeted state is around 2. Varying sanctions from 0 to 1 increases the predicted count by about 4.3, a 115 percent increase in the occurrence of domestic terrorist attacks. Notably, this effect is larger than that of decreasing respect for human rights (+2.5) and strengthening democratic institutions (+1.7). Unsurprisingly, the occurrence of civil war has the largest substantive effect (+9.1). Though the expected number of terrorist attacks is relatively low, varying these indicators in-

creases the expected count by a substantively meaningful amount given baseline expectations.¹³ Overall, sanctions compare favorably to other standard predictors of domestic terrorism, including democracy and human rights behavior, but have less of an effect when compared to civil war.

Despite this, the simulation in Table 3 cannot demonstrate the dynamic effects of a decreasing level of sanctions due to its utilization of sanctions as a dichotomous variable. In the empirical model, sanctions decay over time such that we would expect the predicted number of terrorist attacks that occur because of sanctions to decrease over time. That is, sanctions should have the largest effect immediately following implementation of a sanctions program, with the predicted number of attacks decreasing over time *ceteris paribus*. Figure 1 demonstrates this relationship, showing a decrease in the predicted number of terrorist attacks over time relative to sanctions at a linear decay rate of 0.9. All other variables are held constant at their means. Subsequently, the predicted number of terrorist attacks drops from five in the initial year of sanctions to three attacks five years into the program. Ten years after sanctions have been imposed, the predicted number of attacks falls to less than two. What we can derive from this figure, as well as the simulation in Table 3, is that sanctions lead to significant and increasing levels of domestic terrorism primarily in the years immediately after they are imposed.

Discussion and Conclusion

Costly sanctions affect the dynamics of domestic political violence in target states. This finding has important foreign policy implications because it identifies another inadvertent consequence of sanctions. While sender states and institutions may not expect attempts at economic coercion to affect internal political violence, it is clear that sanctions have serious unanticipated ramifications for the target state. Sanctions empower domestic terrorist groups by generating economic deprivation. Incorporo-

13 Moreover, it is worth noting that this simulation estimates only the instantaneous effect of sanctions on terrorism because it is not a dynamic simulation that estimates long-term effects. Because the series is autoregressive, we can expect sanctions to affect not only terrorism in the same time period, but terrorism in the following two years as well (Williams and Whitten 2012; De Boef and Keele 2008). This implies that the simulations described here provide a relatively conservative estimate of the independent variables' substantive effect on terrorism.

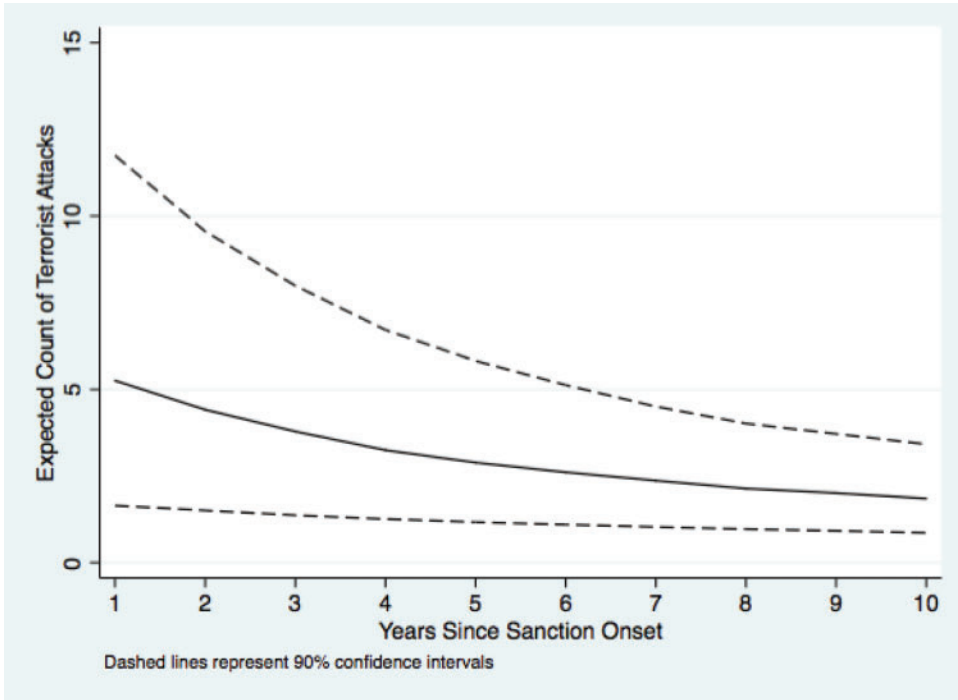


Figure 1. Predicted counts of terrorist attacks over time w/sanctions effect decaying.

rating this knowledge into current discussions regarding the use of sanctions may allow sender states and institutions to develop more humane and effective uses of economic coercion.

Importantly, the United States and its allies are by far the most common sender states. Given the United States’ stated goal of deterring terrorism, comprehensive sanctions directed at states may not be an effective foreign policy instrument in achieving that goal. Though the United States and its allies have clearly focused on stemming transnational terrorism, domestic and transnational terrorist groups often cooperate with one another and enjoy significant benefits from doing so (Phillips 2014). States must be cognizant of these linkages and the risk of encouraging domestic terrorism in order to effectively combat all forms of terrorism.

More broadly, this work speaks to previous scholarship on the consequences of sanctions. First, Wood (2008) and Peksen (2009) show that sanctions lead to an increase in government repression. Peksen (2009) specifically argues that sanctions generate more violence among citizens in target states, thereby increasing levels of government repression. This article builds on this literature by demonstrating that sanctions specifically increase political violence and domestic terrorism. In other words, the findings here imply that repressive behavior in re-

sponse to sanctions occurs partly because of increases in anti-government activity and terrorist attacks.

Second, Thyne (2006) suggests that sanctions do not have an impact on civil war onset. However, because Thyne’s piece focuses on the impact of external actors on the bargaining process between the government and rebels, the likelihood of civil war onset is not inconsistent with the findings here. Rather, it is important to consider that sanctions can have different consequences on different forms of political violence. While sanctions may not induce civil war, they may alter political violence in others ways, including domestic terrorism.

Third, Allen (2008) suggests sanctions can increase anti-government protests in target states. Consistent with these findings, I suggest sanctions affect civilian behavior in target states leading to specific increases in domestic terrorism. Finally, this analysis speaks to the research on state sponsorship of militant groups abroad (Byman 2005). Though this article does not examine explicit support for terrorist groups by foreign governments, it demonstrates how sanctions can be used as implicit forms of support by outside actors.

While confirming much of the existing literature, these findings raise additional sources of inquiry. In particular, sanctions may increase levels of non-violent resistance by civilians in target states as a result of eco-

conomic deprivation. It would also be worthwhile to investigate how blame is apportioned during sanctions through the lens of terrorism. Although I demonstrate that sanctions increase domestic terrorism, previous work shows that sanctions increase transnational terrorist attacks directed against the sender state (Choi and Luo 2013). Future research could examine the conditions that make sanctions more likely to generate domestic terrorism in target states as opposed to transnational terrorism against sender states. What is clear is that the theoretical argument and empirical evidence presented above suggest that further research into the linkage between sanctions and domestic politics, particularly political violence, is needed.

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